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A Shrewd American Girl

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Miss Christine Atherton, an English girl whose birth had been of ordinary parents, was a guest at the seat of the Duke of Brentnord. Miss Atherton was in love with the duke's oldest son and heir, the Marquis of Hiddleton.

Among the guests at the duke's residence, Slapper Grange, was a Kansas girl, Miss Edith Brown, the daughter of one who if he had been titled would have been called the prince of packers. Miss Brown was expected to inherit a large fortune, and this was the reason for her being at Slapper Grange, for the Brentnords were not overburdened with ready cash, and the marquis was on the lookout for a wealthy American wife.

Now, Miss Brown had no more reverence for a title than for a membership of a sewing society. She was one of the kind to see through a millstone, and it was plain to her that the marquis wanted her for her money, and Miss Atherton wanted the marquis for himself.

"So long as I don't want him myself," mused Miss Brown, "why shouldn't I help this young English girl to get him?"

Now, there was a skeleton in the Brentnord closet. The duke, who was an old man, was a kleptomaniac. He was not allowed when in the city to go into the shops without a footman to follow him and pay for what he stole. When the old gentleman appropriated an article the footman would step up to the clerk behind the counter from which it was taken and say:

"Is grace is shopping today. 'Ow much for the 'and mirror 'e took?"

"I see," the clerk would reply. "That one is three and six."

This would be followed up by other purchases acquired in the same way and duly paid for by the footman. There was nothing upon which the marquis was so sensitive as this mania of his father. He had made every effort to avoid the disgrace, even to an attempt to shut his father up, but as kleptomania is not a form of insanity that warrants confining a person in bedlam the duke maintained his liberty.

One morning Miss Brown remained in her room when the others were down to breakfast and, being alone on the floor, went into Miss Atherton's room, took all the jewelry the poor girl had, carried it to the duke's apartment and slipped it into the pocket of a coat she found hanging in a closet. Then she went downstairs to breakfast.

After the meal Miss Brown kept Miss Atherton under observation so that she might be the first to meet the English girl after the discovery of the loss. Just before luncheon Miss Atherton came out of her room with a terror stricken look on her face. Miss Brown was in the hall.

"My jewels!" exclaimed Miss Atherton.

"What of 'em?" asked Miss Brown, putting a finger on her lip to enjoin caution.

"They're gone."

"Hist! The duke? You know his falling?"

"I've heard of it."

"Don't say a word about it. The marquis would never forgive you."

"Do you really think it best?"

"I do."

"And I must lose the gems?"

"Never mind that; they will come back to you."

That night at dinner Miss Atherton appeared without a particle of jewelry. The marquis noticed it, but made no comment. After dinner he joined Miss Atherton on the terrace. He never noticed the absence of anything belonging to any of his guests without dreading lest his father had purloined it.

"Christine," he said, "why did you leave off your jewels today at dinner?"

"Oh, they're so insignificant," she said, "compared with what the other ladies wear."

"Miss Brown, for instance."

The lady named had that day appeared bedizened with a small fortune in diamonds.

"Hers are very handsome."

"Umph! These Americans don't know when or where to load up with stones."

When on future occasions the marquis noticed that Miss Atherton still refrained from wearing her jewels he wondered. Then one day Miss Brown spoke to him of the omission.

"She doesn't wear them," said the marquis, "because she's ashamed of them."

"Nonsense," replied Miss Brown. "That's not her reason. She has too much kindness in her to hurt your feelings by giving you the true one."

"Good gracious! You don't mean they have been stolen!"

"I do."

"And the thief?"

"Search your father's pockets."

The marquis made the search and returned the jewels. The incident decided him on marrying for love or money. He proposed to Miss Atherton, much touched that she had preferred to lose her finery to accusing his father.

"As for that American girl," he added, "she had the indelicacy common among her countrymen. She did not hesitate to remind me that my father is a thief."

Miss Brown left the grange covered with jewels, but when she got in a train she put them in her satchel.

GOLD LEAF.

Made Now Practically as It Was Made Nine Centuries Ago.

In an article on gold leaf in the Magazine of Commerce John Mastin says that just as the date of the discovery of gold is too remote even to be guessed at so is the origin of gold leaf lost in antiquity.

On some of the most ancient mummies discovered gold leaf has been used on the skin, tongue, teeth, etc., and in some instances on the coffins also. It also appears on tombs, monuments and the like, and, strange to say, though gilding with "thin sheets of hammered gold" and "skins of gold"—otherwise gold leaf—was known to be practiced at least in the eighth century B. C., the process of bringing the gold into these fine sheets or "skins" was, at any rate in the eleventh century A. D., substantially the same as that used today, no advance whatever having been made in the intervening nine centuries.

Further, on some of the Grecian pottery of the fifth century the gold leaf used is as thin as that used today, so that in results obtained also we have not advanced in the least, but still keep practically to the same average thickness as that used on the Egyptian coffins of the third century A. D. and most of the Greek vases of the fifth.

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